Divine Word International Journal of Management and Humanities 4(2)(2025) 1768-1790

Research in Management and Humanities

DWIJMH VOL. 4 NO. 2 (2025) ISSN: 2980-4817

Available online at www.dwijmh.org
Journal homepage: http://www.dwijmh.org
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Strategic leadership and employee productivity in open universities as supported by demographic profile and supporting factors

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A R T I C L E I N F O

Article history:
Received: April 25, 2025
Received in rev. form. May 20, 2025
Accepted: June 01, 2025
Published: June 20, 2025

Keywords: ***Strategic Leadership, Employee Productivity, Open University***

JEL Classification: M15

A B S T R A C T

This study focused on strategic leadership and employee productivity in open universities. A literature was conducted to provide a deeper understanding of these concepts. This study utilized the quantitative descriptive assessment and correlational research design utilizing the frequency, percentage, mean, and bivariate correlation. The sample included the 121 students enrolled in the open universities in University of Northern Philippines and Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas in consortium with Divine Word College of Vigan. Results indicated that the demographic factors: gender, age group, level of education, and income per month and supporting factors: training policy and budgeting factors are determinants for strategic leadership and employee productivity in an open university. However, there is no significant relationship between demographic profile with the supporting factors: training policy and budget. Likewise, there is no significant relationship of the demographic factors between the components of strategic leadership and employee productivity. The study suggests further research with larger sample and additional variables to more comprehensively assess the outcomes.

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Introduction

The Open University (OU) is widely regarded as one of the most innovative educational developments of the 21st century. Its mission is to be "open to people, open to places, open to methods, and open to ideas" (https://about.open.ac.uk). The institution's goal is to provide higher education to adults, leveraging mass media to support the learning process. It does not aim to overhaul the traditional higher education curriculum but rather to make it more accessible and explicitly available to a broader audience (https://helpdesk.opou.edc.ph). OU caters to adults who are unable or unwilling to pursue full-time study. Many students are employed full-time or managing family responsibilities while they study. No specific educational qualifications are required for admission. As a

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distance-learning institution, OU enables students to study at home, at their own pace, using a mix of correspondence materials, television and radio broadcasts, other audiovisual resources, and face-to-face tutorials (https://www.uudoon.in).

OU offers various courses, some of which are available to both continuing education students and undergraduates, while others are exclusive to one group. This model has already been implemented at several universities in the Philippines, such as the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU), Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU), Pangasinan State University, Benguet State University, University of Northern Philippines, and Mariano Marcos State University, among others (https://unp.ed.ph). The university operates without traditional entry exams, and students are not required to attend live lectures. Despite this, it maintains the same educational management approach as conventional universities. OU's unique structure relies on students learning independently through a combination of written materials and various media formats. Thus, leadership styles and strategic leadership are crucial in developing the skills and knowledge needed by potential managers and administrators across all sectors. Research shows that leadership and strategic leadership practices by top management teams significantly impact an organization's competitiveness and financial performance (Carter & Greer, 2013).

Understanding strategic leadership is vital because the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders from top management teams have become more intense and complex. Some leaders take on strategic leadership roles without adequate training or experience, which can lead to decreased profitability. A lack of preparedness in strategic leadership can jeopardize an organization's competitiveness, performance, and long-term sustainability (Bansal & Desjardine, 2014).

The gap in existing research lies in the limited exploration of strategic leadership and employee productivity, particularly in the context of open universities. Most of the theory development in strategic leadership has focused on the for-profit sector. Although several theoretical articles discuss leadership in non-profit organizations, there is scant research on this topic within open universities. As the author is a graduate of the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU) in Los Baños, Laguna, she decided to conduct this study to examine how open university students can be equipped with management and leadership skills through a strategic framework implemented by top management. The study will also assess how training policies, budgets, and the five components of strategic leadership—determining direction, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, developing human capital, sustaining an effective organizational culture, and emphasizing ethical practices—affect employee productivity. Additionally, the study will explore whether demographic factors influence the supporting components.

In a study by Phipps & Burbach (2010), they highlight the differences between the roles of public and private executives, noting that public executives face different informational, interpersonal, and decisional challenges. Furthermore, the definition of leadership can vary based on the context.

The open universities involved in this study include the University of Northern Philippines and Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU), Batangas. LPU is included due to its collaboration with Divine Word College of Vigan in offering graduate programs. This study on "Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity in Open Universities" aims to enhance the working capacity of personnel within this sector, enabling them to make better decisions and solve organizational challenges. The researcher chose this study because the leadership capabilities of Open University leaders are crucial for equipping students with the knowledge and training, they need to develop strategic plans and leadership skills for their future roles.

This study is organized into several sections: introduction, literature review, research methodology, data presentation and analysis, results and discussion, and conclusion.

Literature review

The literature review examines existing research on strategic leadership and employee productivity focusing specifically on strategic leadership, employee productivity with some demographic profile.

Open University

The philosophy of distance learning is rooted in the concept of lifelong learning, both from life and for life. Education for life is an ongoing process that spans a lifetime, utilizing methodologies that encourage active participation, promote dialogue, and foster engagement in the learning process (https://www.domuni.eu). One such example of an Open University in the Philippines is the University of Northern Philippines Open University (UNPOU). In alignment with constitutional mandates, UNPOU is committed to providing and promoting quality education at both graduate and undergraduate levels. It aims to offer accessible self-learning, group learning, and out-of-school study programs that respond to the social needs and challenges of an information and technology-driven society, as well as a global economy. The goal is to create an educational experience for lifelong learning and sustainable development that meets international standards. The Open University concept at UNPOU began with the establishment of the Institute of Distance Learning in 1996 through Board Resolution No. 84 s. 1996. It officially gained recognition as a separate academic unit on July 1, 1999 (https://unp.edu.ph).

The vision of UNPOU is to serve as a platform that offers educational opportunities to individuals who might otherwise be excluded due to geographical constraints or the nature of their employment. It aims to be a regional, national, and international center for distance learning. The objectives of the Open University include providing equal access to quality higher education and ensuring academic excellence, academic freedom, and social responsibility among its faculty, staff, and students (https://about.open.ac). Specifically, the Open University seeks to provide an alternative delivery system for quality higher education, offering both graduate and undergraduate programs, as well as non-degree courses through distance education. It also serves as a platform for continuing professional education, supporting sustainable career advancement and skill development for individuals who cannot commit to full-time studies due to work or other commitments. Additionally, UNPOU works to complement the improvement of traditional residential instruction by developing, testing, and utilizing innovative instructional materials and technologies, which are shared with other institutions through cooperative programs. The university also seeks to establish partnerships with renowned distance learning centers locally and internationally and to advocate for the development of a community of leaders who collaborate and work together, shifting away from isolated work and competition.

Instructional materials at UNPOU are developed by a core group of faculty members trained by SEAMEO-INNOTECH in instructional design for distance education. Additionally, UNPOU procures modules from licensed sources such as SEAMEO-INNOTECH and UP Open University (https://unp.edu.ph).

The delivery system at UNPOU encourages cooperation and teamwork among learners, which is essential for successful distance education (https://model.upou.edu.ph). Distance learners often experience isolation, and regular study group meetings help alleviate feelings of loneliness. The presence of study groups fosters teamwork, collaboration, and a sense of community. Facilitators and learners sign learning agreements outlining their responsibilities to the Open University. This approach is designed to reduce dropout rates, a common issue in distance education. Study group meetings provide learners with an opportunity to exchange ideas, ask questions, and reflect on the lessons learned. This collaborative environment promotes the creation of new knowledge and fosters deeper understanding. Additionally, regular meetings strengthen relationships among learners, helping to build a supportive community of leaders and learners. Learning groups also provide exciting opportunities for the design of collaborative and cooperative learning activities.

UNPOU recognizes the need for learner interaction and does not leave students entirely to their own devices, even though materials are designed for self-study. Support for learners is provided through various means, including face-to-face study sessions with UNPOU professors, study sessions with facilitators, and faculty visits. These study sessions, which typically occur once a month, allow learners to clarify doubts, discuss issues, and apply what they have learned in the past month. Such sessions also promote stronger relationships among learners, often resulting in deeper friendships than those formed in traditional residential settings. In these sessions, facilitators, tutors, and coordinators can provide counseling and academic guidance (UNPOU Manual, 1999). Facilitators are typically based at the job-site or cluster site and are responsible for facilitating monthly face-to-face interactions, monitoring student progress, reporting to UNPOU, and collecting assignments. To maintain instructional quality, facilitators must hold at least a master's degree. If no qualified candidates are available, an office head with special training may be selected. In some cases, facilitators can also be learners in their own right, engaging in continuing professional education while fulfilling their teaching duties (UNPOU Manual, 1999).

The term "Open University" at Lyceum of the Philippines, Batangas (LPU Batangas) refers to the accessibility and flexibility of their graduate programs rather than a formal "Open University" designation. LPU Batangas offers a variety of graduate programs designed to promote research and leadership, fostering career advancement. Although LPU Batangas does not explicitly state it is an "Open University" in the traditional sense (where students can enroll without formal requirements), it provides flexible enrollment options and accessible information through various channels, such as their Facebook page and website (https://lpubatangas.edu.ph). The graduate school emphasizes holistic learning, development, and leadership, with a focus on research skills. Its tagline, "Learn Different, Live Different, Learning Beyond Productivity," suggests a commitment to a comprehensive educational experience. LPU Batangas offers programs in hybrid learning formats and online courses designed to accommodate working professionals. Recognized for academic excellence, LPU Batangas is ranked 19th among universities in the Philippines (https://university.open.ac.uk).

Figure 1. A comparison can be made between a Traditional and Open University system. (UNPOU Manual, 1999)

Traditional System	Open University System
Delivery System: - Schedule of classroom discussion with the teachers on specific topics - Standardized knowledge transmitted from teacher to learner in the classroom Methods are suited more to teaching than to learning	- Multi-channel. Use of modules, tutoring and seminars. The lessons are uniform and complete - Methods are flexible and related to application needs. Learning occurs through observation and doing
Cost: - Incurs transportation and going to school expenses	- Economical- saves on transportation and incidental expenses
Distance /Accessibility: - Those located in distant places cannot avail of education	- Mobile type education, minimize use of transportation
Participants: - Limited to class only. Learners are age defined - Limited to one period of life (children/youth/adult) - Caters mainly to urban, upper- and middle-class students	- More students coming from the depressed disadvantage and under-served places - Can be availed by any age group - No social class discrimination

Location: - Highly visible, mono-functional institutions concentrated in urban locations	- Law viability, learning takes place in various locations. Learning not detached from practice
Rewards: - Rewards are referred to the future when learners shall have completed trainings - A means by which cultural heritage is handed down.	- Produces tangible and immediate pay-off related top learners' daily life and work - A means for the individuals' continuing self-development. Emphasizes self-discipline and self-reliance.

Figure 1.

Strategic leadership

Ryan (2008) defines strategy as "the journey you will take to reach your vision." Davies and Ellison (2003) suggest that strategy should be viewed as a medium-term activity, typically spanning three to five years, focused on broad, aggregated data rather than detailed plans. In "Rethinking Strategy and Strategic Leadership in Schools," it is argued that strategy is a pattern of decisions and actions taken to achieve an organization's goals. William (2009) describes strategic leadership in a business school context as a dynamic process where individuals initiate or support changes that align with the school's mission and objectives. Rowe (2001) defines strategic leadership as the ability to influence others to make day-to-day decisions that enhance the organization's long-term viability. Effective strategic leadership involves strategic thinking, emotional intelligence, and a range of behaviors—both transactional and transformational leadership (Amos, 2007). Kobacoff (2009) notes that strategic leaders take a broad, long-range approach to decision-making, driven by objective analysis and forward-thinking.

Strategic leadership is the ability to influence others to make decisions that ensure an organization's long-term success and financial stability. Executives must have the tools and skills for both strategy formulation and implementation to manage change effectively (Fulmer, Stumpf, & Bleak, 2009). Failure to adapt to evolving technology, climate change, and economic factors risks organizational obsolescence. Strategic leadership requires a balance of analytical thinking and human dimensions, with leaders engaging the entire organization in strategy dialogues to build adaptable, high-performing teams (Fulmer, Stumpf, & Bleak, 1991).

Key components of effective strategic leadership include determining direction, maintaining core competencies, developing human capital, fostering an ethical culture, and establishing balanced control systems. Strategic leaders must make difficult yet necessary decisions in response to internal and external challenges (Daellenbach, McCarthy & Schoenecker, 1999). The challenge lies not only in creating a winning strategy but also in motivating employees to execute and adapt it as conditions evolve. Leaders must focus on the process of strategy development—its human aspects—as much as on its content (Fulmer, Stumpf & Bleak, 2009).

Rowe (2001) distinguishes between strategic visionary and managerial leadership. Strategic leadership relies on a shared vision to guide day-to-day decision-making, while managerial leaders focus on routine tasks and functional areas. Visionary leadership, by contrast, is future-oriented, risk-taking, and independent of the organization's identity. Visionary leaders embrace high-risk ventures, especially when the rewards are substantial. In education, Barron (1995) emphasizes strategic thinking and continual leadership development, urging leaders to identify necessary changes and equip others with new leadership models to shape the educational environment.

Capobianco et al. (2013) argue that leadership skills can be developed through experiential learning, where employees practice various leadership approaches without formal training. Gentry et al. (2013) further suggest that executive leadership programs should include feedback mechanisms and focus on the participants' leadership needs.

Tawadros (2015) stresses that strategic leaders anticipate threats and opportunities, and he advocates for mentorship, job rotation, coaching, and a learning-focused environment to build these skills. Effective strategic leadership enables leaders to anticipate challenges and respond appropriately (Abudho-Riwo, Njanja & Ochieng, 2012), while Mauri & Romero (2013) highlight its role in shaping organizational culture and values. Leaders must be strategic planners, guiding their teams to achieve long-term goals (Carter & Greer, 2013).

Leadership directly impacts performance indicators and overall organizational success (Hiller et al., 2011). Dries and Pepermans (2012) explored leadership potential, identifying criteria to assess emerging leaders. A future leader should be capable of handling complex problems, learning from experience, and driving change (Andressen, Konradt & Neck, 2012). Despite debates over the definition of leadership (Allio, 2013), scholars agree that leadership development is crucial for performance improvement and sustainability (Haigh & Hoffman, 2014). Strategic management performance can be assessed using various constructs, with a multi-tool approach enhancing validity (Mitchell et al., 2013).

Competitive advantage is directly linked to organizational performance (Birger, 2005), and managerial competencies significantly influence organizational strategy. Developing human capital, managerial cognition, and social capital supports dynamic capabilities that drive performance (Beck & Wiersema, 2013). Distinguishing between strategic and operational performance is key, as organizational success depends on effectively executing strategic goals (Mitchell et al., 2013). Leadership balances task and people management, with organizational performance hinging on employee cooperation and effective leadership styles (Mastrangelo, Eddy & Lorenzet, 2014). Traditional leadership models may no longer support modern business trends (Abdelgawad et al., 2013).

Transformational leadership fosters positive group behaviors and strong interpersonal relationships. Zhang et al. (2013) highlight the role of the CEO and executive team in influencing organizational performance, emphasizing that the individual performance of top management does not significantly impact outcomes. Competence in public speaking and emotional intelligence are critical aspects of charismatic leadership (Heracleous & Klaering, 2014). Zaccaro (2007) notes that charismatic leaders consistently demonstrate competence and emotional intelligence, connecting with diverse audiences. Leadership, as a complex set of behaviors beyond mere traits, is best understood through situational leadership theories (Zaccaro, 2007).

Employee productivity

A strong relationship between leaders and employees fosters trust and enhances organizational performance through increased employee productivity (Lee & Jensen, 2014). Leadership behaviors, such as role modeling, respect, collaboration, and effective communication, significantly influence workplace harmony and organizational performance (Chaudhry, Javed & Sabir, 2012). Latham (2013) explored how top management teams successfully transform their organizations to achieve performance excellence, emphasizing leadership behaviors like persistence, accountability, systems thinking, personal involvement, and learning. He found that a values-driven culture, teamwork, employee empowerment, customer focus, and trust are crucial to building human capital, which in turn drives business success.

Innovation is a broad concept that encompasses both technological and organizational changes, which are key to organizational competitiveness (Damanpour, 2014). Research and the development of new knowledge play a pivotal role in modernizing organizational processes. Damanpour highlights the need for theoretical frameworks to guide future studies on management innovation to improve organizational performance. Organizational performance depends on human resources, operational efficiency, and the ability to adapt to innovation (Barney, 2001). Understanding performance constructs can help leaders improve human resource productivity. Effective knowledge management is critical, and leadership strategies, whether prescriptive or restrictive, significantly influence IT-based organizations' performance.

Employee productivity is closely linked to strategic leadership. A core element of strategic leadership is developing human capital, which should be seen as a resource to be maximized rather than a cost to minimize. Strategic leaders focus on building skills in current and future leaders to nurture the human capital necessary for organizational success. The development and use of organizational controls guide the firm's flexibility, leveraging core competencies to capitalize on market opportunities. The best outcomes are achieved when strategic and financial controls are balanced (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 1999).

Decision-making is fundamental to management and business activities. Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier (2011) argue that leaders and entrepreneurs often make decisions with less than 50% accuracy. Effective decision-making involves a strategic, purposeful thinking process. It requires evaluating alternatives, relying on intuition, taking action, and assessing the results. Decision-makers regularly encounter decision points, supported by data that informs their decisions (Guerra-Lopez & Thomas, 2011). The impact of data-driven decision-making is amplified by technological advancements in decision support systems. Decision-making involves selecting the most appropriate course of action to achieve desired outcomes (Danielsson & Alm, 2012), with key factors such as clear goals, adequate resources, a positive work environment, and effective communication influencing productivity (Kahneman, Daniel & Tversky, 2000).

Decision-making is shaped by a decision-maker's mental framework (Abatecola & Mandarelli, 2013). It is important to examine how the traits of top management teams, including CEOs, influence corporate decision-making, particularly in developing human capital. The CEO's emotional intelligence, social networking, and decision-making skills directly affect organizational performance. Continuous learning, guided by the CEO's education and experience, is essential for improving decision-making and overall performance. Integrating risk management strategies with business strategies enhances organizational competitiveness (Suriadi et al., 2014).

Strategic leadership and employee productivity are interconnected, particularly in open universities. Strategic leaders play a vital role in boosting productivity by setting clear goals, empowering employees, fostering a culture of innovation, recognizing outstanding performance, and addressing challenges that hinder productivity (Danielsson & Alm, 2000).

In summary, strategic leadership in open universities involves setting a clear vision, developing plans to achieve goals, allocating resources effectively, and creating a positive work culture. Leaders must make informed decisions to drive growth and success, which ultimately influences their students. By applying strategic leadership, these organizations foster an environment that supports employee productivity and academic success, facilitating the transfer of leadership skills to future professionals.

Statement of the problems

The study is designed to assess the strategic leadership and employee productivity in open universities. Specifically, it addressed the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the students enrolled in the Open University in terms of:
    1.1. gender,
    1.2. age group,
    1.3. level of education,
    1.4. income per month.

2. What is the level of strategic leadership and employee productivity on the supporting factors:
    2.1. training policy

2.2. budgeting

3. What is the level of strategic leadership and employee productivity in terms of:
   3.1. determining direction
   3.2. exploiting and maintaining core competencies
   3.3. developing human capital,
   3.4. sustaining an effective organizational culture
   3.5. emphasizing ethical practices

4. Is there a significant relationship of strategic leadership and employee productivity with the demographic and supporting factors?

5. Is there a significant relationship of the components of strategic leadership and employee productivity with the demographic factors?

Hypothesis

Building on these findings, the current study posits that there is no significant relationship between strategic leadership and employee productivity, when considering supporting factors such as training policies and budget. Additionally, demographic factors—namely gender, age, education, and income—show no significant relationship with the five components of strategic leadership: determining direction, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, developing human capital, sustaining an effective organizational culture, and emphasizing ethical practices. Consequently, the study suggests that there is no significant relationship between the individual components of strategic leadership and employee productivity.

Scope and delimitation of the study

The study examines the relationship between strategic leadership and employee productivity, with a particular focus on supporting factors such as training policies and budget. It also explores the influence of demographic factors—namely gender, age, education, and income—on the five key components of strategic leadership: determining direction, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, developing human capital, sustaining an effective organizational culture, and emphasizing ethical practices. The research is limited to a population of 121 individuals enrolled in the graduate program at the Open University of both UNP and LPU, Batangas.

Research methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach, descriptive assessment and correlational research design. The researcher has used both the primary and the secondary data in this study.

Data gathering instruments

The primary data for the study were collected through a questionnaire, while secondary data were sourced from books, publications, research studies, and relevant websites. The research was conducted in Vigan City at the University of Northern Philippines and included students enrolled at Lyceum of the Philippines University, Batangas, in collaboration with the Divine Word College of Vigan.

Population and sampling

The study population consists of graduate students and academic staff enrolled in the Open University programs. The researcher employed total enumeration sampling, selecting a sample of 121 students from Lyceum of the Philippines University and the University of Northern Philippines. A total of 121 questionnaires were distributed, all

of which were returned and used for analysis. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent a review process to ensure its accuracy and relevance.

Data gathering procedure

The researcher sought the permission of the respective Presidents of the concerned Open University with the assistance of the Deans for their assistance in the distribution and retrieval of the survey instrument.

Tools for data analysis

The researcher developed the questionnaire based on a comprehensive review of the literature and related studies, and subsequently had it reviewed by experts for validation. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82. Quantitative data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and bivariate correlation. To examine the relationship between strategic leadership and employee productivity among students enrolled in an open university—considering support factors, strategic leadership components, and employee productivity alongside demographic factors—inferential statistics, specifically bivariate correlation at the 0.05 (2-tailed) and 0.01 (2-tailed) significance levels, were applied.

Ethical considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the research process. Respondents' safety and rights were prioritized, ensuring that participation in the study was voluntary. The questionnaire was designed to maintain anonymity, and participants' personal information was kept confidential. Only essential questions were included, focusing solely on the study's objectives. Primary data were accessed and utilized exclusively by the researcher. Additionally, respondents were informed about the study's purpose, and it was made clear that they could withdraw from the survey at any time without consequence.

The value and the corresponding verbal interpretation and norm were the following:

4 - Strongly Agree (SA) - 4.21-5.00
3 - Agree Agree (A) - 3.41-4.20
2 - Moderately Agree (MA) - 2.61-3.40
1 - Strongly Disagree (SD) -1.00-1.80

Data presentation and analysis

The data are presented following the study's objectives, collected through research questionnaires and analyzed using statistical methods.

Problem 1. **What is the demographic profile of the students enrolled in the Open University in terms of:**
a. gender,
b. age group,
c. level of education, and
d. income per month?

Table 1: Demographic Profile
Demographic profile of the students enrolled in the University in terms of: Gender, Age group, Level of education, and Income per month.

		f	%
gender	Female	59	48.76

	Male	62	51.24
	Total	121	100.00
Age Group	Less than 25 years old	18	14.88
	26-35 yo	48	39.67
	36-45 yo	24	19.83
	46-55 yo	19	15.70
	56-60 yo	12	9.92
	over 60 yo	0	0.00
	Total	121	100.00
Level of Education	Bachelor	57	47.11
	Master's Degree	43	35.54
	Doctoral's Degree	21	17.36
	Total	121	100.00
Income Per Month	Below P15,000	14	11.57
	P15,000-P20,000	18	14.88
	P20,001-25,000	17	14.05
	P25,001-35,000	30	24.79
	P35,001-45,000	30	24.79
	P45,000 and above	12	9.92
	Total	121	100.00

Source: Valdez, (2023-2024)

The demographic distribution of the respondents is presented in Table 1, which includes variables such as gender, age group, education level, and monthly income.

In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are male, with 62 males (51.24%) compared to 59 females (48.76%). When examining the age distribution, 14.88% of respondents are under 25 years old, while the largest group, comprising 39.67%, falls within the 26-35 age range. Additionally, 19.83% of the respondents are aged 36-45, 15.70% are between 46-55, and 9.92% are within the 56-60 age bracket. The data indicates that most respondents are in the 26-35 age range, reflecting the common age group for professionals who are advancing in their careers, particularly in senior management roles in educational settings.

Regarding educational attainment, the majority of respondents (47.11%) are pursuing their Bachelor's degree. A significant portion, 35.54%, is working toward a Master's degree, while 17.36% are pursuing a Doctorate. The respondents pursuing a Bachelor's degree are typically university employees or those aiming to complete their undergraduate studies, while Master's students tend to be individuals working in the public or private sector. Doctoral students are primarily senior or administrative executives, including professors and principals.

When considering monthly income, the data reveals that the majority of respondents earn between ₱25,001 and ₱35,000 (24.79%) and ₱35,001 to ₱45,000 (24.79%), followed by 9.92% of respondents earning over ₱45,000. On the lower end, 11.57% of respondents earn below ₱15,000 per month. The higher-income group consists mainly of individuals in management or administrative roles, with experience in both government and private sector organizations. The lower-income respondents are generally employees in non-managerial or support positions.

This distribution of respondents provides a diverse sample of individuals with varying professional experiences, educational backgrounds, and income levels, offering a comprehensive understanding of the population in this study.

Problem 2. What is the level of strategic leadership and employee productivity on the supporting factors:
a. training policy, and
b. budgeting?

2: Supporting factors on training policy and budgeting in strategic leadership and employee productivity.

Table 2.1: Supporting Factors of the Respondents in terms of Training Factor

Training Policy	**LPU**		**UNP**		**Composite Mean**	
	X	**DR**	**X**	**DR**	**X**	**DR**
1) You think that training policies are sufficient to develop skills for strategic leadership.	4.41	SA	4.40	SA	4.40	SA
2) You think that university must increase budget for developing leaders.	4.44	SA	4.24	SA	4.29	SA
3) You think that the strategic leadership need to train every year.	4.37	SA	4.29	SA	4.31	SA
Composite Mean	4.41	SA	4.31	SA	4.33	SA

Source: Hitt. et.al, (2007)

Legend:

Descriptive Interpretation Statistical Range
4 - Strongly Agree (SA) - 4.21-5.00
3 - Agree (A) - 3.41-4.20
2 - Moderately Agree (MA) - 2.61-3.40
1 - Strongly Disagree (SD) -1.00-1.80

The data indicates that respondents strongly agree with the importance of the supporting factor related to the training policy. Specifically, the training policies within the Open University aim to improve the management skills of students—who are often managers and employees—on strategic leadership and productivity. The composite mean for training policies at both Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU) and the University of Northern Philippines (UNP) is 4.33, reflecting a strong consensus of agreement.

Respondents consistently affirmed that the training policies are adequate to develop skills for strategic leadership. They also expressed the view that the universities should allocate more resources to leadership development and emphasized the need for annual training in strategic leadership. This underscores the significant role of training in enhancing both strategic leadership and productivity for students enrolled in Open Universities. These skills are not only cultivated through training but are also applicable in their professional roles, directly impacting their job performance.

Baron (1995) noted that leadership in the education system involves practicing existing skills and influencing others to adopt new leadership models. Furthermore, educators, administrators, and other practitioners must continually engage in leadership training to develop their management capabilities. As Capobianco et al. (2013) pointed out, leadership development is a challenging yet essential task for organizational leaders who must enhance the leadership

skills of their employees. This aligns with the study's findings, highlighting that strategic leadership training plays a crucial role in improving the overall effectiveness of students in Open Universities.

Table 2.2: Supporting Factors of the Respondents in terms of Budgeting

Budgeting	LPU		UNP		Composite Mean	
	X	DR	X	DR	X	DR
1) You think that budget for training not enough for strategic leaders training course.	4.22	SA	4.16	A	4.17	A
2) You think that university must increase budget for training courses.	4.41	SA	4.13	A	4.19	A
3) You think that university must prepare budget for effective strategic leadership training from external.	4.41	SA	4.16	A	4.21	SA
Composite Mean	4.35	SA	4.15	A	4.19	A

Source: Hitt, et. al, (2007)

The data reveals that respondents from both LPU and UNP agree on the importance of budgeting as a supporting factor. The composite mean for budgeting is 4.19, indicating general agreement. Among the budgeting items, the respondents strongly agreed that the university should allocate funds for effective strategic leadership training from external sources. However, they agreed that the current budget for training is insufficient for strategic leadership courses, and they advocated for an increase in the budget for these programs.

This reflects a consensus that budgeting is a critical factor impacting the effectiveness of strategic leadership and employee productivity. Without sufficient funding for work improvement projects and leadership development, the performance and growth of students enrolled in Open Universities will be hindered. As Hitt et al. (2004) emphasized, strategic leadership actions, including the development of human capital and proper budgeting, are vital for the progress of personnel in educational institutions. Therefore, the knowledge and skills gained through these programs will be applied by the recipients in their respective workplaces, driving performance improvement.

Table 2.3: Summary of Supporting Factors of the Respondents

Supporting Factors	LPU		UNP		As A Whole	
	X	DR	X	DR	X	DR
Training Policy	4.41	SA	4.31	SA	4.33	SA
Budgeting	4.35	SA	4.15	A	4.19	A
Overall	4.38	SA	4.24	SA	4.27	SA

Source: Hitt, et.al, (2007)

The data shows that respondents generally agree on the importance of the supporting factors, specifically training policy and budgeting, in fostering strategic leadership and productivity. The overall mean for these supporting factors is 4.27, indicating strong agreement. Among the components, respondents strongly agreed with the effectiveness of the training policy, while they expressed agreement regarding the adequacy of the budget.

This underscores the critical role that both training policy and budgeting play in developing strategic leadership and enhancing productivity for students in Open Universities. It suggests that academic leaders, particularly in management, must be more supportive and capable in teaching management, training, and leadership within educational institutions. This aligns with Pomdam (2015), who argued that the knowledge and skills of a firm's workforce are valuable resources that require significant investment in training, development, and knowledge management.

Table 3.1 Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity in an Open University in terms of Determining Direction

Determining direction	LPU		UNP		Composite Mean	
	X	DR	X	DR	X	DR
1) You believe that effective strategic leadership is the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility and empower others.	4.52	SA	4.46	SA	4.47	SA
2) You think that strategic leadership can create strategic change as necessary.	4.44	SA	4.18	A	4.24	SA
3) You think that the strategic leadership can direct the firm that involves developing a long-term vision of the institution's strategic intent.	4.48	SA	4.15	A	4.22	SA
Composite Mean	4.48	SA	4.26	SA	4.31	SA

Source: Silverman, (2000)

The data reveals that respondents strongly agree with the importance of determining direction, as reflected by a composite mean of 4.31. All the items consistently reflect strong agreement, indicating that effective strategic leadership involves the ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, and empower others. Respondents believe that strategic leadership not only creates necessary strategic changes but also directs the organization by developing a long-term vision aligned with the institution's strategic intent.

This strong agreement highlights that determining direction is a crucial factor in both strategic leadership and employee productivity. Strategic leadership, as defined, is the ability to influence others to make decisions that enhance the long-term success and financial stability of the organization. Managing change and uncertainty requires leaders who provide direction while also building ownership and alignment within their teams to implement change. As noted by Fulmer et al. (2009), effectively navigating change is a key aspect of strategic leadership, which involves demonstrating leadership attributes, influence, and the ability to inspire and guide team members toward the organization's vision.

Table 3.2: Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity in an Open University in terms of Exploiting and Maintaining Core Competencies

Exploiting and maintaining core competencies	LPU		UNP		Composite Mean	
	X	DR	X	DR	X	DR
1) You think that strategic leader can develop and exploit core competencies in many different functional area.	4.44	SA	4.32	SA	4.35	SA
2) You think that strategic leaders must verify that the institution's competencies are emphasized in strategy implementation efforts.	4.44	SA	4.16	A	4.22	SA
3) You think that strategic leader have the ability to solve problems and risk management.	4.52	SA	4.09	A	4.18	A
Composite Mean	4.47	SA	4.19	A	4.25	SA

Source: Silverman, (2000)

The data indicates that respondents strongly agree on the importance of exploiting and maintaining core competencies in strategic leadership and employee productivity within an open university, with a composite mean of 4.25. The majority of respondents believe that strategic leaders can develop and leverage core competencies across

various functional areas. They also agree that strategic leaders must ensure the institution's core competencies are aligned with strategy implementation efforts and possess the ability to manage risks and solve problems effectively.

This strong agreement highlights that exploiting and maintaining core competencies is a key factor in both strategic leadership and enhancing employee productivity. Strategic leaders must guarantee that their organization's core competencies are utilized effectively to deliver value and quality to students. As Hitt et al. (1999) suggest, the process of exploiting and maintaining core competencies is integral to the firm's long-term strategic vision. Core competencies, resources, and capabilities serve as a competitive advantage, enabling the organization to outperform its rivals and sustain long-term success.

Table 3.3: Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity in an Open University in terms of Developing Human Capital

Developing human capital	**LPU**		**UNP**		**Composite Mean**	
	X	**DR**	**X**	**DR**	**X**	**DR**
1) You think that strategic leaders have technical knowledge and working skills.	4.41	SA	4.13	A	4.19	A
2) You think that strategic leaders have high competitive advantage skill.	4.44	SA	3.98	A	4.08	A
3) You think that strategic leaders have the ability to create team building.	4.44	SA	4.11	A	4.18	A
Composite Mean	4.43	SA	4.07	A	4.15	A

Source: Silverman, (2000)

As reflected in the table, the composite mean for developing human capital is 4.15, indicating agreement among respondents. Consistent agreement is observed across all items, with respondents believing that strategic leaders possess technical knowledge, strong working skills, a competitive advantage, and the ability to foster team-building.

The importance of developing human capital as a critical element of strategic leadership is highlighted by the respondents' views. Human capital is seen not as a cost to be minimized, but as a resource to be maximized. This strongly suggests that developing human capital is an essential factor in both strategic leadership and enhancing employee productivity.

These findings align with the perspective of Ireland et al. (2024), who argue that the knowledge and skills of an organization's workforce are valuable capital resources that require continuous investment in training, development, and knowledge management. Moreover, social capital—relationships both within and outside the organization—plays a crucial role in achieving tasks and creating value for customers and stakeholders. Therefore, a leader must manage strategic frameworks and operational guidelines to effectively guide and develop human capital, which in turn strengthens organizational performance.

Table 3.4: Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity in an Open University in terms of Sustaining an Effective Organization Culture

Sustaining an effective organization culture (complex set of ideologies, symbols and core values)	**LPU**		**UNP**		**Composite Mean**	
	X	**DR**	**X**	**DR**	**X**	**DR**
1) You think that strategic leaders can develop a process to help institution's build stronger employees.	4.48	SA	4.24	SA	4.30	SA

2) You believe that transforming an organization and its culture is challenging.	4.37	SA	4.16	A	4.21	SA
3) You believe that organizations should provide cutting –edge tools for effective use and teaching.	4.44	SA	4.07	A	4.16	A
Composite Mean	4.43	SA	4.16	A	4.22	SA

Source: Silverman, (2000)

The data presented in the table indicates that respondents agree on the significance of sustaining an effective organizational culture in relation to strategic leadership and employee productivity in an open university learning environment. With a composite mean of 4.22, the respondents strongly agree that strategic leadership plays a vital role in cultivating an effective organizational culture.

Among the items related to sustaining an effective organizational culture, respondents strongly agreed that strategic leaders are capable of developing processes to help institutions strengthen their workforce. They also believe that transforming an organization and its culture presents challenges, but that organizations must provide cutting-edge tools to facilitate effective use and teaching. This strong agreement underscores the critical role that sustaining an effective organizational culture plays in both strategic leadership and enhancing employee productivity.

Strategic leadership offers techniques focused on purpose-driven best practices that are essential for maintaining competitiveness and relevance. Learning, as a key element of strategic leadership development, should be deeply embedded within the organizational culture. In an effective culture, administrators create a supportive, non-threatening work environment that encourages creativity and innovation, where employees can learn and grow without fear of punishment or failure.

These findings align with the work of Ireland et al. (2024), who described sustaining an effective organizational culture as a complex set of shared ideologies, symbols, and core values that influence business operations. Effective strategic leaders recognize the need for cultural transformation, understanding that shaping and reinforcing culture requires a combination of effective communication, problem-solving skills, hiring the right people, conducting meaningful performance appraisals, and establishing appropriate reward systems. By implementing such strategies, strategic leaders can foster a culture that builds stronger employees and effectively navigates organizational challenges.

Table 3.5: Strategic leadership and employee productivity in an Open University in terms of emphasizing ethical practices

Emphasizing ethical practices	**LPU**		**UNP**		**Composite Mean**	
	X	**DR**	**X**	**DR**	**X**	**DR**
1) You believe that the effectiveness of processes is based on ethical practices.	4.33	SA	4.23	SA	4.26	SA
2) You believe employees are encouraged to exercise ethical judgment and behave ethically at all times.	4.37	SA	4.07	A	4.14	A
3) You think that organizational control has long been viewed.	4.26	SA	3.95	A	4.02	A
Composite Mean	4.32	SA	4.09	A	4.12	A

Source: Siverman (2000))

As shown in the table, the composite mean for respondents emphasizing ethical practices is 4.12, indicating agreement with this factor. Among the items related to emphasizing ethical practices, respondents strongly agreed that the effectiveness of processes depends on ethical practices. They believe that employees are encouraged to

exercise ethical judgment and behave ethically at all times. Additionally, they think that organizational controls have long been viewed as integral to maintaining ethical standards. This strong agreement highlights that emphasizing ethical practices is a crucial factor in both strategic leadership and employee productivity.

Emphasizing ethical practices involves developing and implementing methods and procedures that uphold the firm's ethical standards. It includes creating explicit reward systems that recognize ethical acts, as well as fostering a work environment that encourages strategic leaders to act with integrity. This includes demonstrating ethical behavior, adhering to personal principles, and guiding business decisions based on ethical frameworks. In this context, ethical leadership helps build trust, promote a positive organizational culture, and drive long-term success, all while minimizing harm to stakeholders and the environment.

These findings are consistent with the work of Hitt et al. (1999), who noted that strategic leadership actions that are rooted in ethical practices enhance social capital and goodwill for the firm. When processes are ethically grounded, they not only improve organizational performance but also contribute to a sustainable and responsible business environment.

Table 3.6: Components of Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity in an Open University

Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity	LPU		UNP		As A Whole	
	X	DR	X	DR	X	DR
Determining direction	4.48	SA	4.26	SA	4.31	SA
Exploiting and maintaining core competencies	4.47	SA	4.19	A	4.25	SA
Developing human capital	4.43	SA	4.07	A	4.15	A
Sustaining an effective organization culture	4.43	SA	4.16	A	4.22	SA
Emphasizing ethical practices	4.32	SA	4.09	A	4.12	A
Overall	4.43	SA	4.15	A	4.21	SA

Source: Silverman, (2000)

The overall mean for strategic leadership and employee productivity in an open university is strongly agree, with a composite mean of 4.21. Among the factors, respondents strongly agreed with determining direction, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, and sustaining an effective organizational culture. Meanwhile, developing human capital and emphasizing ethical practices were rated as "agree".

The findings underscore the importance of strategic leadership in guiding organizations toward success. Decisions based on purpose and best business practices are essential for maintaining a competitive edge. Failure to adapt to changing technologies, climate shifts, and economic risks could render an organization obsolete. Engaging the entire organization in strategic dialogue is crucial for laying the foundation to build resilient, adaptable organizations that can define, commit to, and adjust their strategies swiftly when necessary.

Dallenbach et al. (1999) define strategic leadership as a potential source of competitive advantage, emphasizing five key components: determining strategic direction, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, developing human capital, sustaining an effective organizational culture, and emphasizing ethical practices. Effective strategic leaders are willing to make candid, courageous, and often difficult decisions that are necessary in response to both internal and external challenges facing their institutions.

Problem 4. Is there a significant relationship of strategic leadership and employee productivity with the demographic and supporting factors?

5. Is there a significant relationship of the components of strategic leadership and employee productivity with the demographic factors?

Table 4. Test Indicating the Relationship of Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity between with the Demographic factors and Supporting Factors

	Training policy	Budgeting	Overall supporting
Gender	.040	.045	.053
Age Group	-.052	-.019	-.026
Education	.161	.073	.133
Income	.080	-.021	.035

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data presents the relationship between strategic leadership, demographic variables, and employee productivity, based on training policy and budgeting in an open university. As shown in the table, gender, age group, education, and income all have no significant relationship with the supporting factors (training policy and budgeting). Specifically, gender (t = 0.053), age group (t = -0.026), education (t = 0.133), and income (t = 0.035) revealed no significant correlations.

These findings suggest that strategic leadership and employee productivity are not significantly influenced by demographic variables at both 0.01 and 0.05 significance levels. Regardless of gender, strategic leaders play similar roles in management, demonstrating flexibility, responsibility, and the ability to align co-workers with organizational goals. As noted by Ireland et al. (2024), a leader's age does not hinder their capacity to offer long-term vision and flexibility to achieve the organization's goals. Therefore, the level of education of strategic leaders does not significantly affect employee productivity in an open university context.

5. Is there a significant relationship of the components of strategic leadership and employee productivity with the demographic factors?

Table 5. Test of the Relationship of the Components of the Strategic Leadership and Employee Productivity with the Demographic Factors

	Determining direction	Exploiting	Developing human	Sustaining	Emphasizing	Overall
Gender	.080	.107	.068	.053	.078	.084
Age Group	-.062	.044	.013	-.059	.011	-.010
Education	.158	.156	.120	.033	.117	.130
Income	.124	.079	.121	.007	.144	.105

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The data reveals that there is no significant relationship between demographic factors and the five components of strategic leadership and employee productivity in an open university. Specifically, gender (t = 0.084), age group (t = -0.010), education level (t = 0.130), and income (t = 0.105) showed no significant correlation with the components

grouped as determining direction, exploiting and maintaining core competencies, developing human capital, sustaining an effective organizational culture, and emphasizing ethical practices.

Thus, the study indicates that neither demographic variables nor the individual components of strategic leadership significantly affect employee productivity, even when considering supporting factors like training policy and budgeting, at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels. This aligns with Hitt et al. (2004), who emphasized that leadership in a university setting is a dynamic process. A strategically focused university is one that is effective both short-term and long-term, with a clear framework to translate core values and vision into educational outcomes.

Discussion

The study explored the relationship between demographic factors and strategic leadership, as well as employee productivity in an open university context. Key findings emphasize the crucial role of strategic leadership actions, particularly in developing human capital, through continuous investment in training, development, and knowledge management. Leadership in an open university setting requires a dynamic approach that includes a clear framework and processes to meet institutional goals, aligning with the views of Hitt, Hoskisson, and Ireland (2007).

Interestingly, the analysis revealed no significant relationship between demographic factors—such as age, gender, education, and income—and the five components of strategic leadership. This suggests that while demographic factors may influence personal attributes, they do not directly affect strategic leadership or employee productivity in this setting.

The study also highlighted the importance of support factors like training and budgeting. Training plays a critical role in enhancing the skills of both staff and students, equipping them to meet the changing demands of an open university environment. Proper budgeting is equally important, ensuring that resources are allocated for ongoing development and operational improvements. As noted by Capobianco et al. (2013), leadership development through experiential learning techniques is key, as employees can enhance their leadership capabilities even without formal training.

From these findings, several key strategic actions are proposed to improve leadership effectiveness and employee productivity. First, leaders should focus on setting clear academic goals and defining long-term strategic direction. This ensures the university remains committed to its core ideologies and future aspirations. Open universities must also continuously assess and develop their core competencies to maintain a competitive edge. This includes leveraging institutional strengths and focusing on human resource development.

Investing in human capital is another vital area. By prioritizing training and development, the university not only enhances the skills of its workforce but also builds relationships within and outside the institution, creating value for both employees and students. Additionally, leadership must foster an organizational culture that promotes innovation, collaboration, and adaptability. This can be achieved by introducing new teaching tools and maintaining a supportive work environment.

Finally, a strong ethical framework is essential. Leaders should ensure that all actions within the university are guided by integrity and ethical principles, which in turn fosters a positive and productive organizational culture.

In summary, strategic leadership and employee productivity in an open university are deeply interconnected. While demographic factors do not directly influence these areas, the study demonstrates the importance of a well-defined strategy that integrates leadership development, effective training, and ethical practices. By focusing on these strategic elements, the open university can improve both leadership effectiveness and overall academic performance,

aligning with the views of Hitt, Hoskisson, and Ireland (2007), who highlight the importance of human capital and strategic management in driving organizational success.

Conclusion

This study underscores how strategic leadership plays a vital role in boosting employee productivity and nurturing human capital in an open university setting. By aligning training policies and budgets with the institution's goals, academic leaders can drive growth and help students thrive, both in their studies and future careers.

The results show that strategic leadership is key to navigating the rapid changes in technology, the economy, and the environment. In open universities, where flexibility and innovation are crucial, leadership can make or break an institution's ability to adapt. Interestingly, factors like gender, age, education, and income didn't seem to influence the relationship between leadership and productivity. What really matters is the ongoing investment in developing human capital, which fuels long-term success and helps organizations stay competitive.

At the end of the day, strategic leadership doesn't just impact the university—it also shapes the students, preparing them for real-world challenges. The findings emphasize that to truly succeed, universities need to focus on planning, leadership, and resource management to meet their goals and keep improving educational practices.

Author's contributions: E.B.V. **The conceptualization:** E.B.V. **Research methodology:** E.B.V. **Analysis of data:** E.B.V.

Conflict of interest statement: Author declares no conflict of interest.

Ethical Review statement: the research is submitted to the ethical review board and approved for the conduct of the study. Ethical guidelines were put into this research.

Funding: the study is funded by the author.

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